DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 075 438 SP 006 446

TITLE	A Master's Degree Program for the Teaching of Culturally and Educationally Deprived Children and Youth.
INSTITUTION	Western Michigan Univ., Kalamazoo.
PUB DATE	67
NOTE	13p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Camping; *Disadvantaged Groups; *Masters Degrees; Program Descriptions; *Sensitivity Training; *Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Distinguished Achievement Award Entry

ABSTRACT

This report presents a master's degree program for the teaching of underprivileged children. It offers a program consisting of preservice involvement with the disadvantaged, informal seminars, teaching and camp counseling, fellowship to acquaint the faculty with the poor, sensitivity groups to enhance teacher effectiveness, and an evaluation indicating student preparedness for working with underprivileged children. Two appendixes presenting budget and student comment are included. (JB)

ED 075433

A MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

FOR THE TEACHING OF CULTURALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY DEPRIVED

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

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Submitted to:

The American Association of
Colleges for Teacher Education

For:

Consideration for the Distinguished
Achievement Award of 1968

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SP 006 446

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SUMMARY

Concern for excellence in the preparation of teachers has brought recognition of the need to improve the education of the disadvantaged. Directing its efforts toward those whom society has too long neglected, Western Michigan University has instituted a Master's Degree program in the Teaching of economically and educationally disadvantaged children and youth.

Unique features of the program include: (1) pre-service teachers' direct involvement with the disadvantaged in ways which open teachers' eyes to the causes of educational deprivation, enable them to identify with humans less fortunate than themselves, and contribute social service to the community; (2) informal seminars with national authorities, with the disadvantaged, and with those who work with them; (3) eight weeks of supervised teaching and camp counseling experience with migrant or inner-city children; (4) fellowships for faculty members, to acquaint them with the problems of the poor and to prepare them to contribute to the preparation of teachers of the disadvantaged; (5) sensitivity groups designed to strengthen and reinforce the courage, honesty, and openness necessary to meet the challenges of a new educational era; and (6) evaluation which indicates that the participants have experienced an encouraging change in attitudes and in preparedness for working with deprived children.

This program is a significant aspect of a multi-faceted approach to the problem of educating disadvantaged children and youth which has greatly excited the faculty and students of the University. Aided by federal and local funds, the University has dedicated itself to a vigorous program of teacher preparation for all the children of all the people.

A MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM FOR THE TEACHING OF CULTURALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY DEPRIVED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

It is difficult to estimate the number of children in the United States whose education is inadequate owing to their unfortunate socio-economic position. During the past decade, the nation has become aware of the special needs of children of the inner city, of the migrant stream, and of rural pockets of poverty. No less than in the public schools, these children have been neglected at the college level.

As part of an attempt to fulfill the university's social responsibility, the School of Education of Western Michigan University inaugurated a Master's Degree program for the preparation of teachers of economically and educationally disadvantaged children and youth. Beginning with a pilot project in the spring and summer of 1966, the program continued with approximately 70 preservice and in-service teachers during the 1967 split trimester.

Two major purposes of the program were: to develop teachers' empathy with the lives, the values, the customs, and the difficulties of the disadvantaged children they intend to teach; and to improve college professors' qualifications for preparing teachers of the disadvantaged. The development of theoretical understanding of the social and psychological factors pressing the disadvantaged, and the opportunity to apply new knowledge and to exercise acceptant attitudes were also important goals. Success in guiding the development of disadvantaged children was expected to encourage teachers to remain with the disadvantaged.

During the spring and summer terms, fellowship grants allowed the full-time participation of nine faculty members from several disciplines. Students received six hours of credit toward the Master's Degree for each term of

full-time participation in on- and off-campus activities. Their financial support included payment of tuition and a modest stipend which alleviated the necessity for part-time employment.

The spring term at the university was spent in informal seminars with resource people, each of whom was an acknowledged expert in his field. For example, Dr. Clayton Lafferty emphasized the importance of the self-concept to the achievement of children and the effectiveness of teachers; Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs offered keys to effective classroom management and group dynamics; Dr. Russell Jones brought new insight into the civil rights struggle; Dr. Myrtle Reul and ex-migrants shared the experience of being a migrant; students from a Chicago ghetto high school demonstrated their knowledge of Negro history and debated racial issues with Western's students; Dr. Joe L. Frost discussed new developments in migrant education; ADC mothers and social workers talked about welfare from their own points of view; Kalamazoo City Commissioners were quizzed concerning their civil rights positions, and Dr. Ernest Melby emphasized the school's importance to the child's self-image. Students' reading and field experiences were developed and discussed in small groups under faculty guidance. Members of Western's staff demonstrated the development of reading, science, and art curricula. The university's library and audio-visual resources were at the disposal of the students, and an additional library especially relevant to our purposes was purchased.

On the premise that understanding and care for others develop when one becomes involved with those others, active participation with the culturally different became a core of the program. Over a decade ago, Quillen noted:

> The teacher unavoidably transmits values, whether by intention or not . . . a teacher may be unintentionally so selectively constricted in his value orientation that he interacts effectively only with that range of students who mirror his own values. Experiencing culture shock, in even a partial degree, seems to reduce this

tendency to operate within too narrow a framework of values.[1]

To widen the range of acceptable values and to produce "culture shock," deep involvement with the disadvantaged was facilitated. Both students and faculty taught youths enrolled at the Fort Custer Job Corps Center, did social casework, and helped individual families from Kalamazoo's impoverished Negro community. Students and faculty conducted a sociological survey among the community's poor, revealing the use of social services and community resources which these families desired. Students taught young people at Kalamazoo County's Juvenile home, they worked with cases from the Juvenile Court, and taught at the adult reading center. Several faculty members and students made a trip to Appalachia, where they shared in the efforts of Vista workers and visited rural mountain homes and schools, while others visited tenement homes and slum schools in Chicago. Many students committed themselves to such involvement throughout most of the afternoons and evenings, and informal "bull sessions" with and about the poor often lasted into the small hours of morning.

Sensitivity groups were a distinctive feature of the program. Each was composed of approximately ten students guided by a professional counselor. Here, students gained strength to face themselves, their attitudes, their fears, and the many new challenges inherent in working with the poor. Faculty members also formed a sensitivity group, where they shared their doubts, fears, and hopes, benefited from mutual support, and grew in mutual affection and respect.

During the summer term, 30 of the pre-service teachers were joined by 26 in-service teachers and five elementary school counselors to staff three schools for migrant children, operated by the Van Buren County Intermediate School District as part of the Michigan State Department of Education project for children

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[1]Quillen, James, Spindler, George D., and Thomas, Lawrence G., "The Value Orientation of Teacher Education." American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Ninth Yearbook, 1956; p. 13.

of migrant workers. Using the openness and facility for honest relationships they had acquired in the sensitivity groups, the teachers worked in teams of five or six, cooperating in their efforts to broaden children's experiences as a basis for concept development, devising methods and materials to meet specific children's needs, and providing a rich and varied curriculum for several hundred migrant children. Faculty supervisors and teachers found opportunities to work with parents; they held ice cream socials, fiestas, and rummage sales; they visited migrant camps to talk with parents and to recruit children for the schools. They talked with growers and gained an understanding of their problems.

An additional 24 pre-service teachers lived and worked at two camps for inner-city children, spending 24 hours a day with these youngsters and developing their skills, their self-esteem, and their aspirations as they worked and played together.

A faculty member supervised each school and camp program throughout the summer, gaining intern experience in confronting the problems of teaching the disadvantaged. Seminars for all teachers accompanied this period of service.

The breadth of the program was made possible by the cooperation and generosity of many institutions. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, through the National Institute for Advanced Study in Teaching Disadvantaged Youth, provided grants for faculty fellowships. State Title I funds provided for student and faculty stipends and resource people. Local school districts paid the salaries of participants who served as teachers of migrants; and Pretty Lake Camp and Camp Channing provided salaries for teachers' services. The University also contributed salaries, contingent fees, facilities and services. (See Appendix A.)

In completing the Master's Degree, students study the related

disciplines of sociology, psychology, economics, and educational foundations. Each pursues those curricular areas -- such as teaching of the language arts -- which he and his advisor consider most essential to the improvement of his teaching performance. In a final seminar, students synthesize their learning and present a substantial paper or research report.

Interest in the disadvantaged at Western Michigan University is not confined to the unique program just described. Through the Upward Bound program, the University has given new hope and higher expectations to the disadvantaged youth. It has prepared several hundred teachers and aides for Head Start nurseries, and it regularly maintains student teachers at the nearby Job Corps center. Students help the children of the community through the Kalamazoo Tutorial Project. In the fall term, 1967, a program for the training of community school directors was initiated. Experimental undergraduate programs provide teacher aides for migrant and inner-city schools.

Such a program demands new curricular and institutional arrangements, thereby creating a climate for thoughtful change which is felt throughout the School and University. Closer relations with the public schools and community agencies have resulted from such efforts. These additional and unexpected rewards have demonstrated the spiraling salutary effect which flexibility in one area may produce in other parts of an institution.

Preliminary evaluation of the attempt to improve attitudes and to increase acceptance of the culturally different shows positive changes in teachers' attitudes toward disadvantaged children (significant at the one per cent level) as measured by the Semantic Differential. Initial analysis of the results of the Personal Orientation Inventory indicate that positive and significant changes occurred on 12 scales purportedly measuring a tendency toward self-actualization. Follow-up studies of attitude change measured by the Rokeach

Dogmatism Scale and of teacher-pupil interaction reflected by the Flanders-Amidon VICS, are forthcoming.

Personal evaluations indicate the depth of experience and high motivation the program produced. Reporting on her trip to Appalachia, a student says:

> . . . Yes, I had read and heard about it, but by golly it was <u>not</u> like going down there and seeing it for myself first-hand, like talking to the people myself, like trying to help a fifth grader in a one-room school house. I shall never forget them. I hope I do more than just remember. I hope in some way that I will <u>do</u> something about it.

A sampling of other students' comments reveals insights and satisfactions:

> After seeing this side of the teen-ager, I began to realize how naive I was . . . . not until I had seen these kids and their parents could I understand emotionally . . . . During the spring session I saw how important it is for the teacher to know himself . . . . Everybody was interacting. You didn't feel like some poor slob going to class as usual . . . . Thank you for practicing in education what's been preached for the last I-don't-know-how-many years . . . . (See Appendix B for further student comments.)

Faculty members' reports show similar reactions:

> . . . there is little doubt that the program was extremely valuable to me in a cognitive sense. However . . . the most valuable aspects of the program for me were affective in nature. To say it simply, it changed me as a person . . . . I am now really <u>excited</u> about the role of the university as an agent of social change.
>
> . . . I learned first-hand through a close relationship with a multi-problem Negro family the difficulty experienced in attempting to change behavior patterns . . . To help a small Negro boy appreciate verbal humor, to encourage him to look others directly in their eyes, to hear him say how good milk tastes because he hasn't had any "since the baby came," to hear him yell, "See me swim!" when he was in six inches of water, to take him home to a drunken step-father . . . to see his face and the light in his eyes as I tuck him in bed and kiss him goodnight--how can I assess what these experiences have done for me and to me? I am not the same person I was in April . . . .

The program results are rewardingly close to its goals: a strong, emotional commitment to the education of the disadvantaged on the part of students and faculty; and a greater understanding of the social forces which create poverty, of the psychological problems of the poor, and of the role the schools can play in helping the poor to a better place in society.

While the Master's program has already brought desired outcomes, it will change as it grows, and as the faculty grows in experience and understanding. What was learned from last year's experiences will be used next spring and summer to give students more intensive training in curriculum development, to allow more time for the reading seminars in which students synthesize their explorations of the literature, and to provide sufficient personnel for the conduct of research. The staff hopes to continue to create in good teachers a concern for the disadvantaged children who need them, as it continues to meet teachers' needs for substance and skill in teaching the disadvantaged.

APPENDIX A

INCOME AND EXPENDITURES, SPRING AND SUMMER, 1967

SOURCES OF INCOME

National Institute for Advanced Study in Teaching Disadvantaged Youth	$ 32,173.99
State Title I funds	34,895.00
Local School Districts (Title I Funds)	57,900.00
Pretty Lake Camp	4,000.00
Camp Channing	750.00
Western Michigan University	12,000.00
TOTAL	$141,718.99

EXPENDITURES

Faculty and administration	$ 13,200.56
Faculty fellowship grants	25,940.00
Student stipends	28,325.00
Students' tuition	2,800.00
Teachers' salaries	57,900.00
Camp counselors' salaries	4,750.00
Travel	2,652.42
Travel, consultants	1,372.23
Educational materials, supplies	1,696.46
Evaluation and dissemination	592.32
Audit	700.00
Miscellaneous	1,790.00
TOTAL	$141,718.99

APPENDIX B

Evaluations following the spring and summer terms included tape-recorded evaluations made by small groups of students. The following excerpts from these recorded evaluations are an indication of the developing understanding, the change of attitude and the growing skill and confidence which have been apparent in students enrolled in the master's degree program.

1. I read a lot more than I thought I was going to . . . . I have read a lot more in just these seven weeks than I have ever read . . . .

2. . . . After hearing Dreikurs, I wanted to read; I wanted to find out about it . . . When I saw the book on the encouragement process, I just grabbed it. I had to have it.

3. (The spring program) opened my eyes to the problems of disadvantaged youth. I had no idea of the immensity of the problem.

4. I feel I got the real inside picture of these children. I got involved with these kids, rubbed shoulders with them, and found that I could work with them.

5. . . . the total program including Pretty Lake was by far the best learning experience of my life.

6. (What I liked about the program was) the unstructured time. . . . If you had an idea you had time to try it. Nothing reasonable was ever refused.

7. (At Pretty Lake) I developed more confidence in myself as being capable of working with the disadvantaged . . . . (It) helped me to break down communication barriers with these children . . . . I became less critical and more understanding.

8. The emerging flexibility of teachers was a delight to see.

9. The Mexican-American child is a beautiful child full of eagerness and joy for living . . . . The migrant child is a loved and loving child . . . .

10. The migrant child is a delightful, beautiful, eager person. Our program helped him become a more secure, adequately-prepared student. The value of the program far exceeded the difficulties and frustrations encountered. It was a tremendous experience for children and teachers alike.

11. We would even get to the point where we would say, "All right, I'm not going to talk about the program at dinner tonight." We would sit there for about five minutes not saying anything. It was either that or nothing. We didn't have anything else to talk about.

12. I think the informality that was part of this program was outstanding. I think the attitudes shown by the staff as a whole lent more to learning than possibly any other thing. I think Lafferty really hit the nail on the head when he said to reduce the anxiety level, and I think this whole program was geared to reduce the anxiety level for the students so that you can learn better.

13. The thing that I enjoyed most about this program was the interaction with the students and professors.

14. I think this program has given us a very well-rounded exposure to the whole problem. We haven't been told that when you go into the schools everything is going to be rosy, and then on the other side we haven't been told that everything is going to be bad. And we haven't been told what to think about things.

15. Another thing I wanted to say about the program in general is that I enjoyed the freedom of it. It wasn't like a regular class and I found that I did more. There wasn't any pressure. No one said you have to read this or do that but I did it because I wanted to. I enjoyed the speakers very much.

16. It's given me a good chance to think about myself, what I want to do, what I have been doing.

17. I wasn't objective at all. I couldn't be. I tried to be and I tried to think I could become objective, but sitting there in that courtroom I couldn't be objective at all . . . . I said to myself, "This cannot possibly be true."

18. . . . diapers so dirty that you can't take them off without giving the kid a bath. We have to have a doctor because when the diaper comes off we'll have to treat the child for burns.

19. I like to make the children feel as if I am as excited about teaching as I am in their learning what I have to teach.

20. It <u>is</u> possible to teach positively. "No" rarely <u>has</u> to be used. There <u>can</u> be a positive attitude to everything. This is <u>not</u> only theory--it <u>can</u> be done!

21. . . . in the classroom a lot of times the teacher, if he is threatened at all, becomes very defensive. If he could understand why he is being threatened he would be able to be less defensive . . . A lot of times the teacher takes as a personal threat something that isn't meant to be that at all . . . So if you think fast, "Why is this kid doing this? It's not you that he is striking out at, it's something else."

22. Seems like the whole world is run by gym teachers and old ladies.

23. I came in contact with so many different people in the field that we are going to be dealing with: school administrators,

school teachers, juvenile homes, police officers, the parents themselves, and the home and environment . . . . Personally, I think this alone really broadens a person's perspective . . . .

24. What I've tried to do is to build their idea to the point where they can take over and not feel that they have to be dependent on a specific probation officer, because the kids have been in trouble before and they function very well when they are on probation. They need, well, a father image in this situation and they get lonesome for it. What they have to do eventually if they are going to come out of their trouble is start assuming responsibility for their own actions without depending . . .

25. Perhaps we won't realize all of it for a few years . . . there is no doubt in my mind that we have become better teachers, let alone better human beings.